OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSLATION

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論文要旨

翻訳者の役割という問題は、しばしばあいまいなままにされている。翻訳という行為自体は過小評価されながら、その結果にたいしては非現実的な期待が寄せられることが多い。本論は、翻訳に際して生じる問題点について考察したものである。筆者が最近手がけた現代俳句集の和文英訳を例にとり、文法、文学的技巧、語調、雰囲気が、日本語の原文と英語の訳句とでどう異なるか、また、そのような違いが、翻訳されたそれぞれの作品にどのような効果と影響を与えるかが分析される。

結論として、翻訳という形の異文化間コミュニケーションは、完全に「忠実」な作業ではあり得ない。原文をそのまま他国語で再生しようとする試みは、常に、翻訳言語の文化、歴史、文体的特徴や言葉のもたらす連想などの介入を受ける。翻訳文は、正確に言えば、原文と平行に存在するのである。優れた翻訳は、原文から離れることがあっても原文を評釈し、その内容をより豊かにする創造的な活動なのである。

As anyone with any knowledge of more than one language knows, movement between languages also involves movement between cultures. As we shift languages so we shift perceptions; we can say certain things in one language that are unsayable in another.

NOTHING LOST, NOTHING SACRED, Susan Bassnett, Times Literary Supplement, Sept 6 1996, p 9

Or, to put it more simply: translators, as the Italian proverb goes, are traitors.

Commonly, we use the word 'faithful' of a translator. The term is usually intended as praise, but in the context of translation what can 'faithful' possibly mean? There are no two languages that in translation can retain meaning, association and feeling, word for word, sentence for sentence, line for line. Apart from those fortuitous instances where words chosen to create a certain sense and sensibility in the first language coincide with the dictionary equivalents in the second, a translator will soon discover that closeness to the original in one arena inevitably presupposes a sacrifice in another.

In poetry, particularly, the 'good' translator treads a delicate line, balancing loyalties between the original writer's literal sense and the work's poetic value. What is to be done if the sense in one or other instance is obscure? Should the translator faithfully render the obscurity as it is? Or is it more 'faithful' to clear up the muddy patch? How to avoid the cry of traitor? It seems an impossible task.

This emphasis on the loss of the original can obscure any innate value the translation may have.

> Translation is doubly based on absence: that of the original words on top of that which is signified
>
> LAYERS OF THE ONION, Michèle Roberts, Poetry Review, Vol

81 No 3 1991, p 36

Such an attitude is not conducive to a positive evaluation of translated texts. How then to find a more positive approach?

Work on Miyaji Eiko's bilingual haiku collection, SUIKO, provided me with a unique opportunity to follow the process of translation at close range in a project that involved direct access to the original writer. Here, it should be possible to examine some of the apparently inherent difficulties of translation.

The SUIKO translation team was composed of three nationalities, Japanese (the original writer), Israeli (Japanese-English translator, Iris Elgrichi) and British (myself). The aim was to translate some two hundred Japanese haiku into an equivalent English form. The two cultures, and languages, under translation were those of Japan and Britain. The following pages detail some of observations on this process and on the result, arguing for the intrinsic value of a poetic and what may be termed 'unfaithful' translation.

When translating SUIKO, the first hurdle that was encountered was that of form. Because SUIKO is comprised of individual haiku written in traditional format on the subject of the writer's life, it seemed most appropriate to use the 5-7-5 seventeen syllable three line poem, or "strict form" haiku (THE NATURE OF ENGLISH HAIKU, British Haiku Society, 1996, p 6). Widely accepted in common readership, the 5-7-5 haiku bears the closest relation to the structure of traditional Japanese haiku, and retains the sense of strict rigorousness that a tight syllabic pattern demands. As Kaneko Tota wrote, this form:

> yields the beauty of finality in this life where nothing is final.. [in its] .. set form used by generations of people.... [it] provides a poetic framework for the poet.
>
> MODERN JAPANESE HAIKU, Makoto Ueda, University of Toronto Press, 1976, p 22

However, in the West, where the haiku is still establishing its identity as poetry, particularly as regards the Western publishing circuit, there is strong support for the adoption of a "free" or "organic" form of haiku, as it is termed by the British Haiku Society. This form is to be stress- rather than syllable-based, and, it is argued, is to be preferred to "cutting a 17 syllable sentence into 5-7-5, like some poor worm" (THE NATURE OF ENGLISH HAIKU, British Haiku Society, p 4). These recommendations echo the ideas of William Higginson, charter member of the Haiku Society of America, who bases his proposals on the work of R. H. Blyth, an important interpreter of haiku:

> Since the most commonly encountered short structure in traditional English poetry is the "heroic couplet" with two five-beat lines, the two -three-two-beat structure with a strong grammatical break after the second or fifth beat ...would yield a sense of rhythmic incompleteness similar to that in Japanese haiku.
>
> THE HAIKU HANDBOOK, William J Higginson, Kodansha International, 1985, p 105

Despite these arguments, SUIKO, because of the perceived need to reflect both tradition and form, takes the more 'old-fashioned' 5-7-5 route. It was

deemed important to choose a form that matched the traditional context of the original haiku. This does not of course rule out the possibility of an interplay of English stress patterns within this structure, as the following analysis of SUIKO 48 shows.

SUIKO 48

良寛の書に触れし目を紅梅へ

48 turning, my eyes brush
Ryokan's calligraphy
on the red plum blossom

SUIKO, Miyaji Eiko, 1996

In the English version, the first word, "turning", is strongly stressed, its importance emphasised by the subsequent comma. The following three elements of the poem are separated by the line breaks and highlighted by use of stress: on "eyes" in the first line; the "Ry" of "Ryokan" and "li" of "calligraphy" in the second; and "red" and "plum" in the third. The distance between the two objects seen (calligraphy and blossom) is emphasised by the initial "turning" that the eyes have to do, unlike the connecting "brush", which carries a much weaker stress. However, in contrast to this, the syntax runs smoothly on from the calligraphy to the blossom, with no break or pause, reflecting the content of the haiku - the effortless process whereby two disparate images coincide in synaesthesia. The eyes do not just turn from one image to another, but brush an imprint of the first on the second,

literally placing the images on top of one another, so skillfully that the process whereby this is attained, the brushing process, is gently passed over with only a very weak stress.

The way in which the brushing image is played down is typical of haiku writing, but also raises another difficulty for wider British writing circles. Seventeen syllables is still considered to be an incredibly short quantity with which to produce a poem of any substance.

To write a poem
in seventeen syllables
is very diffic

John Cooper Clarke, British punk poet

In the West a haiku is often felt to be too short to be regarded as a serious poem. There has yet to be a publication of a contemporary collection of haiku by a major Western publisher.

What seems not to be recognised is the fact that such compression in terms of syllables can yield very satisfying results; the meaning has to be compacted to such a degree that new and fresh images can be forced out almost inadvertently through the constrained syntax, apparently as a mere by-product of paring down syllables to the essential seventeen. This can be clearly seen in the following example:

SUIKO 67

目頭に熱きもの来て桐の花

67 the tears prick but up
in the paulownia tree
flowers fill my eyes

A previous, rejected version had:

the tears are pricking
I look up to the tree tops
flowers fill my eyes

It was decided to change "tree" to "paulownia" in order to retain the specificity of the Japanese. This meant three syllables too many. As a result, "I look up" had to go. Such forced pruning improved the poem. The readers now have to enact the leap themselves, from the tearful eyes to the flowering trees, just as they are required to do in the Japanese version, and the action of the head, tilting to keep the tears back, remains in the background, as in the original.

One unexpected difficulty in rewriting Japanese haiku in the English 5-7-5 form is that Japanese words tend to be longer than their English equivalents, as the following retranslation of an English version of a haiku in Miyaji Eiko's collection demonstrates. The Japanese original follows the traditional pattern, while the English version continues with a seventeen

syllable count and transforms the one line into three:

SUIKO 207

正月の青苔（せいたい）にのる靴の先

207 gingerly broaching
the New Year on temple stairs
of fresh velvet moss

Miyaji Chihiro's retranslation is twice as long, a seventeen syllable rendition in English taking up to forty characters to write in the Japanese:

新年にお寺の石段にむしているビロードのような若い苔の上に足を慎重に、そっとのせたよ

Although, as Miyaji Chihiro observes in his as yet unpublished paper on SUIKO, the spirit of the original is retained in the English version of SUIKO 207, it is a very free rendition. There is no mention of the tip of the shoes of the original haiku, now merely implied in the feel of the moss. The sense of place is instead given by the additional "temple stairs", which clearly states where, for a Japanese reader, such moss is usually found. The decision to omit the tip of the shoes has the effect of strengthening the metaphorical reading of "broaching" not only the moss but also the New Year. "Broaching" also gives a sense of an imminent and weighty task. "Gingerly", again not present in the original, contributes timorousness and implies the potential difficulty or delicacy of this move.

Such changes have the effect of giving weight to one particular reading of

the original haiku. They also prompt the suggestion that the act of creating an English version, which runs the risk of coming short of the required number of syllables, can pose various temptations. These include extending the metaphor unnecessarily; developing ideas beyond the bounds of the haiku; and padding out the lines with superfluous attributes. However, given that a translation can rarely reproduce word for word the original poetic sentiment as precisely as in the Japanese, these extra syllables may be used to advantage in the English versions by affording the space to clarify finer points that would otherwise risk being lost in the translation process.

A clear example of the necessity for an explanation in the English that seems superfluous in the Japanese occurs with the decision to include the kigo, or season word, in the English versions of SUIKO. Indeed, this concept is deemed so important that the whole collection has been divided into the four seasons in order to reinforce the seasonal differences for the British reader. They are emphasised to an extent that is unusual in English haiku writing. As a result, some of the less obvious seasonal references in the haiku in SUIKO may well go unobserved by British readers, and others have been highlighted more than would be deemed necessary in the Japanese versions because, as the British Haiku Society points out:

> for the Japanese reader, the season word releases a whole schema of more or less predictable associations. This homogeneity of response is not generally available to the Western haiku poet.
>
> THE NATURE OF ENGLISH HAIKU, The British Haiku Society, 1996, p 3

A clear illustration of this difference can be seen in the following haiku:

SUIKO 22

水甕に水の漲る梅二月

22 the season, the plum
the water jar, teetering
on the brink of spring

Here, the extra word "spring" has been included in the English version. It is implicit in the Japanese reference to the second month, but would not have been clear for a British reader. An echo of spring is also present in the sound of the Japanese word, "haru", standing here for "overflow", but carrying the sound of "spring" as well. Of course, visually the word is not present as the written character is different, but aurally it remains.

In many instances, as was in fact requested in initial meetings with the SUIKO poet and publisher, the English versions act as footnotes, sometimes with reference to the written characters, which are often chosen to include echoes of or comments on the import of the Japanese haiku. Attempts to parallel these subtleties in the English versions can result in variations in translation.

SUIKO 174

枯れ透きて八木重吉の詩の余白

174 bare winter branches
lines of Yagi Jukichi
the whiteness between

The Japanese version does not refer to "branches", using only the word for "withered", a word that is normally employed to describe trees in Japanese, but is not so specific in English. The reference to a tree is made clearer in the Japanese by the characters and sound of "Yagi Jukichi", which include the word for tree, thus reinforcing what exactly has been withered. In English it has been deemed necessary to include an actual mention of a branch, because the subliminal references are no longer present.

At times, the 'footnotes' or explanatory role of the English versions is specifically aimed at the British readership. In the following haiku,

SUIKO 80

青梅雨や首青むまで山に入る

80 green plums in the rain
going into the mountains
I am soaked in green

the characters used to denote the rainy season join together the signs for plums and rain. This combination has been deliberately chosen by the writer to bring to mind the plums which are unripe or green in this season. It was decided to keep the reference to plums in order to retain the poignancy of evoking a whole season by the mention of one detail, ("green plums"). However, since in Britain there is no specific rainy season, rain is referred to twice as "rain" and "soaked" in the English version. Also, the haiku opens and closes with the word "green" to give a sense of the quality of this time of year - a wet, luxuriant and imminent ripening.

Often, the Japanese haiku refer to experiences which may be homogenous in Japan, but cannot be relied upon to evoke the same associations for a British reader. In these cases, therefore, there is a need for some amplification. In the following example, the words "for once" amplify, acting as a 'footnote', the "cool night":

SUIKO 118

能面の裏見せらるる夜の秋

118 The back of a No
mask shown to us in summer
a cool night for once

The exceptionality of a cool night during the Japanese summer needs to be made clear in the English version, since in many parts of Britain a British summer is a relatively mild event.

In some haiku, the need to emphasise an aspect that would otherwise be missed by a British reader has resulted in substantial changes in content. This becomes clear upon examination of the drafts of the English version of SUIKO 155. The printed Japanese and English versions stand thus:

SUIKO 155

朝露の乾く気配の牧草地

155 evaporating
another of God's mornings
the meadow dew dries

The line in this final English version, "another of God's mornings" is an addition to the original Japanese. It was arrived at after many revisions in an attempt to recreate the feeling implicit in the original. In the Japanese it is felt unnecessary to explain why the drying morning dew should be such a satisfying sight. The situation is so much the reverse in the English that an earlier draft even introduced the completely new image of "steaming porridge" to give this sense of satisfaction in the warm security of a daily routine.

dew dries on the grass
while my porridge is steaming
one of God's mornings

This draft was rejected as having strayed too far from the original, but its existence highlights an important difference in Japanese and British cultural experience. The very fact that the need was felt, in the English, for phenomena of nature to be explained by reference to a domestic and more urban experience, reflects a different attitude to and appreciation of the environment. It seems that the Japanese, despite living such urban lives,

remain more aware of and responsive to phenomena of nature on their own terms.

A similar situation occurs in the following haiku:

SUIKO 60

みんみんや山風川風つつ抜ける

60 the cicada's call
blows the mountain and river
through the open house

Here, in the English version, the mountain and the river of the original haiku are placed in the domestic setting of a house. It is a striking image. The flowing simplicity of the lines belies the enormity of the experience. Again, the Japanese version is more subdued. The "house" is not mentioned at all, the call of the cicada simply passing - it is not felt necessary to fix the image. However, despite the extra detail, the English version retains the sense of the original - of the huge phenomena of nature carried to us by a tiny insect. The English writes it larger than the Japanese, but the essential elements remain.

SUIKO 117 also depends on an understanding of nature, this time with reference to a standard Japanese literary text which is exclusively devoted to the seasons:

SUIKO 117

杉の雨清少納言の螢飛ぶ

117 rain on the cedar
and Sei Shonagon's fireflies
best summer evening

"Best" has been added to the English version. It is not needed in the Japanese, because every reader will pick up the reference to THE PILLOW BOOK, and its list of favourite elements in each season.

Not only literary, but educational experience, has an effect on the translations:

SUIKO 11

受験子のいとも短き朝の声

11 morning chatter down
to the bare minimum on
entrance exam day

In the Japanese there is only a general reference to examinations, because, for a Japanese reader that is sufficient to evoke the almost unbearable

tension of university entrance time. There is no one exam in Britain that quite holds the same significance - there being a number of hurdles that schoolchildren have to overcome, and correspondingly (one would hope) a general lessening in tension. Hence, it was felt that the sound of the morning in the Japanese needed to be given more detail in the English in order to give sufficient weight to the importance and stress of that particular day.

Interestingly, in devoting the lines to the description of the morning and the nature of the exams, which may not otherwise be clear to a British reader, any mention of the child who is taking them has been dropped. This appears to be an unusual pattern in my translation experience, the common tendency being for the English version to include or add a mention of people, either directly or through personification. This has the effect of bringing an immediacy and personal feel to the haiku. Such a tendency can partly be explained grammatically, since in Japanese it is standard practice to omit pronouns, and for gender and plurality to remain unspecific, whereas this is difficult to do in English.

In SUIKO, the frequent choice of first or second pronoun in the English versions reflects the nature of the translation process, in the course of which the writer gave subjective explanations of the circumstances of each haiku. However, the decision to use these particular pronouns is also influenced by the content - personal glimpses of a domestic life. The result is a tone that is both subjective and immediate:

SUIKO 96

一別の距離たもちゐて時鳥（ほととぎす）

96 with the cuckoo comes
the summer, yet still distance
widens between us

Here, the original haiku only implies that the distance is between the writer and another. With the use of the pronoun "us", the English version brings this relationship out into the open, its emotion confirmed in the additional "yet still", which highlights the sense of longing and sadness only hinted at in the original. Incidentally, there is also another example of signposting the season for a British reader in the inclusion of the word "summer" in the English haiku. For a Japanese reader, the mention of the 'summer' bird, the cuckoo, is sufficient.

SUIKO 163

アララギの実の密集す関所跡

163 yew at the checkpoint
its purpose forgotten but
for those clustered eyes

In this haiku, the botanical references are simplified for a British reader as the Japanese yew becomes a simple yew. There is a neat echo in the English of the word 'you', thus allowing for the possibility of the haiku breaking into speech and becoming even more immediate. This option is partially blocked by the second line, when "it" can be taken to refer to the yew as well as the checkpoint, but is picked up again in the third with the talk of "clustered eyes" (or even 'I's), which again can refer to the checkpoint or the yew ('you') - now personified as a guard, eyes buried in the cluster of berries.

Incidentally, "checkpoint" is an old word in the Japanese, which, for a Japanese reader, will evoke days long gone when people were regularly stopped and questioned when they travelled. Since the word does not carry the same associations in the English, "its purpose forgotten" was added.

In the following haiku, an element of personification already present in the Japanese is extended in the English:

SUIKO 134

台風の前触れ蓮田耳立てる

134 a typhoon warning
the lotus already knows
pricking up her leaves

Here, the "lotus pond" of the Japanese original is changed into a more specific "lotus". The lotus is personified in "already knows", which attributes the awareness of the typhoon to the lotus; there is no such clear connection in the original. Because of the extension of the personification in the middle line in the English, there is a slighter reference to the lotus as a sentient being in the last line, "ears" being replaced with "leaves". To retain the "ears" would have been too much. However, the gender specific pronoun, "her", is added, keeping the personification of the lotus very much in mind.

SUIKO 199

フランス語に雪道譲る平泉寺

199 merci on Heisen
temple's snowy stairs as we
give way to the French

In this haiku, the inclusion in the English of the French word "merci" clearly evokes speech between two groups of people, making the haiku specific and personal. In addition, "merci" is not only what the French would (and did) say as they pass, it also resembles the English 'mercy', the "giving way" referred to in the last line. Thus, the balance, the 'give and take' of this human contact is also emphasised.

The frequent use of personification, speech and inclusion of pronouns in the English haiku in SUIKO results in the creation of a much more focussed and immediate energy. This has its value, but, if used without discretion, can detract from the universal objectivity of many of the original haiku, the "universality that is due to anonymity" (Miyaji Eiko, SUIKO, Epilogue, p 132, 1996), limiting them to specific and personal memories and moments. The same applies if the shift in emphasis on emotion is too great, an occurence that is likely to happen when specific people are introduced in the haiku.

It takes a careful and judicious ear to know how far a translation can legitimately stray in this way. Inevitably the process involves its losses as

well as its gains. However, the "universality" of the SUIKO haiku is at risk when the English versions, over-enthusiastic in their efforts to explain and elucidate, place too much emphasis on feeling and emotion.

Although at times a shift in emphasis can be unavoidable in translation, the result can be hamfisted, obscuring the delicacy and subtlety of the original:

SUIKO 18

雉(きじ)の目に気押(けお)されまじと草摑む

18 that stern pheasant's eye
would have dragged me right under
thank God for the grass

The eagerness with which the English version spells out the relief and fear in "thank God for the grass" has its cost. "Dragged me right under", despite its mysterious threat, is vague and incomplete, an unsatisfactory replacement of the strangely powerful "clutching at the grass" to save oneself from the pheasant of the Japanese. The sense of a contrast in perspective is diluted and the image itself has been almost completely lost. For once the seventeen syllables are not enough, and the power of the original is weakened.

This desire for explanation, for cohesiveness of content and sense, marks another distinction between the Japanese and English versions. In the traditional Japanese haiku, cohesion is not a quality to be aimed for. The

images are set starkly in juxtaposition. The reader is expected to do the work of forging links between them, or not, as the case may be. This is so much part of Japanese haiku writing that it has been formalised in the use of the kireji (cutting word, "." , or caesura). There is no linking word - merely a gap that the reader is required to fill. Often the language itself is shortened and an incomplete and stilted syntax is used (although this is not always true of SUIKO).

One could argue that some of these effects are partially attained in the English versions by the use of the three line format (a lay-out that has a much more familiar look to a British reader than the one line favoured by the Japanese) - the breaks between the lines acting as kireji. However, the same cannot be said of the English syntax, which tends to be flowing and complete even when the Japanese is very much the reverse. There are a number of occasions in SUIKO where there is a break in the Japanese which the English, apparently blindly, rides over. This is not unintentional. A broken syntax in an English haiku would have a much more abrupt effect than it does in Japanese. Japanese syllables are relatively uniform in length, but English ones vary considerably, and an English haiku cannot depend upon an even flow of syllables to cushion any syntactical breaks. Moreover, English is a stress-based language, and any breaks in grammatical flow also affect the stress pattern. Thus, very different rhythms are created in the two languages, each bringing its own peculiar demands and expectations.

In SUIKO 212, the English haiku rewrites the shortened Japanese syntax into one long grammatical flow. There is no break in the syntax, no kireji, no punctuation even, but the superficial fluidity of the words does not make for an easier reading:

SUIKO 212

山茶花(さざんか)や母穏やかに昏れてをり

212 slowly the light fades
the sasanqua breathes slowly
my mother nods off

This haiku apparently presents a simple list of images of sleep, one in each line, but the lack of punctuation, a common technique in contemporary British poetry to keep ambiguity flowing, works together with the English stress patterns to urge an alternative reading. The two strongest stresses fall on the repeated "slowly". With the repetition, the grammatical flow slows, at the same time as the second "slowly" pivots between the sasanqua and the mother. It is as if the poem itself is on the verge of sleep. Because the first "slowly" came at the beginning of a line, and because the second "slowly" makes up the 'extra' sixth and seventh syllables of the middle line, the tendency to push it over into the third line is even greater, and yet it belongs in the second line. Whatever the reader does, a gap is left that in the even fluidity of unpunctuated words should not be there. Thus, an uninterrupted grammatical flow can make great use of the restrictions of the haiku form, and can still contain the 'gaps' achieved by the syntactical and formal breaks of the Japanese haiku.

Another frequent way of linking the haiku images in the English versions in SUIKO is to employ metaphoric devices. Again, this does not necessarily leave the reader with an easy task. Sometimes, the gaps between the images

have been closed so tight that they sit almost on top of one another, and, in order to appreciate the full import of the poem one feels obliged to disentangle them. Often, the tighter the gap the deeper the meaning.

In the following example, the English version binds the two images together with the device of a simile:

SUIKO 179

返り花今書きしもの反古(ほご)となる

179 I screw up my words
ill-timed like the flower that
gets the wrong season

flower out of season/the thing I wrote just now became waste paper

Direct English translation by Iris Elgrichi

Here, Iris Elgrichi's direct translation makes clear the break between elements in the Japanese: the "flower out of season" and "the thing I wrote just now..". These are linked in the English so that the "thing" written is "like" the flower. The effect is to strengthen the connection between the two elements, but also to narrow the focus. It is now quite evident that the written words are to be compared to the flower and the attribute they share is that of bad timing. In fact this attribute is so stressed in the English that it is mentioned twice in the phrases "ill-timed" and "the wrong season".

There is indeed to be no mistake. The intention is made very clear, but in the process the meaning becomes more limited.

However, the same haiku in the English version also makes use of metaphor with the phrase "I screw up". This refers to the words rather than the paper on which they are written, its usual and more literal context. The actual writing is therefore given a material feel. "Screw up" also carries the colloquial meaning of "I make a mistake" or "I fail to accomplish". "My words" metaphorically stands for paper that has now been screwed up and (one can assume) thrown away, so the original reference to "waste paper" is no longer needed. By eliminating the paper there is an additional sense that these words could be heard as opposed to read, and therefore ill-timed in that they offend a listener, and so cause the speaker to "screw up".

As the above example shows, the use of a simile can limit the readings one gives to a haiku, whereas the addition of a metaphor in its ready inclusion of all possible connections between the two elements can add greater depth. However, this is still a guided depth and, what is more, a depth that may not have been intended in the original. Metaphors should be chosen carefully and used sparingly. Too flagrant a use of metaphor runs the danger of distracting:

SUIKO 41

黎明の囀り濡れて聞こえけり

41 sound of a new dawn
clean in the early morning
freshly washed chorus

In the original Japanese the cleaning metaphor is only mentioned once, and it is up to the reader to decide what has been cleaned - the birdsong, the dawn, or both. The English rather laboriously repeats references to the cleaning process, in "clean" and "washed", and the birdsong, in "sound" and "chorus", thus weakening its impact. An earlier draft of this poem, which did not repeat itself, contained instead a representation of the cleaning image as a washing tub:

early morning dawn
chirping with energy
fresh from the washing tub

Although this draft strayed too far from the original, it did have a less muddled focus, the dawn becoming the sound that is washed, and the physicality of the washing tub presenting a very grounded image from which to develop the idea of cleaning. However, with this strong image the emphasis is moved from the dawn to the tub, which was not the intention of the original haiku.

It could be argued that by linking the elements with metaphor the English versions are doing work that should properly belong to the reader, but as has already been indicated in

SUIKO 67 the tears prick but up
in the paulownia tree
flowers fill my eyes

the metaphor, linking the flowers and eyes, still leaves the reader to make the connection - that the eyes have turned upward to the trees to avoid spilling the tears. The gap in the Japanese, although apparently closed in the English, is still very much in evidence.

Sometimes it seems that even when the parts are linked in the original, a further twist cannot be resisted, and in the English they are pressed even closer together, suggesting an inclination for compression that goes beyond that of the Japanese:

SUIKO 14

寝顔だけ見にゆく見舞牡丹雪

14 soft white flakes of snow
falling on the hospital
on her sleeping face

Here, the quietness and peace of the original is qualified in the English by

a surreal touch, as the snow enters the hospital. The visit (referred to in the Japanese) is removed. Instead, the snow becomes the visitor, falling directly on the woman's face.

The contrast between two elements is sharpened by the very tendency to compress the images into one. The same effect is achieved by the following haiku:

SUIKO 47

耕すや地球と言へる星の土

47 it is strange to see
people ploughing the earth of
a star called the earth

The smoothness of the flow of connecting prepositions counterpoints the amazing juxtaposition of earth, star and earth, and the number of perspectives and infinity of scale that that implies. The English perhaps detracts a little from the original by directing our feelings with the words, "it is strange," but then again when this is followed by the familiar flow of the sentence with its simplicity of language the strangeness referred to in the first line and in the subsequent vision is thrown into relief.

Apart from the addition of "strange," the English and Japanese renderings of SUIKO 47 are very close; perhaps because, in this haiku, earth and its divisions are left behind to be viewed from a space where the differences

between cultures upon earth have nearly disappeared. Nevertheless, the sense of division is there in the ever evasive truths of perspective: what is a star to one viewer is the earth to another.

In such a shifting world, no cross-cultural translation can ever aspire to be the exact equivalent of its original. A more flexible and satisfying approach is to view the translation as a comment upon, or reflection of certain poetic aspects of its source text, presumably those aspects that work best in the new language. Some effects may be painted larger and others diminished according to the translating language's strengths and weaknesses of expression. The emotion, the sense of the personal, even the images can change. The exact relationship between the translation and its source text must always be under negotiation; and the nature of this relationship depends upon the qualities of the work in question, and the knowledge, experience and expectations of the translators and prospective readership. This is clear in SUIKO, where decisions about the translations were made with reference to the British cultural, literary, botanical and other life experience. In the event that, for example, an American rather than a British writer had been involved, one can assume that a totally different set of considerations and influences would have been at work, with markedly different results. Different cultural biases would have produced different shifts not only of emphasis, but also of meaning, because the style, grammar, form, historical knowledge and poetic sensibility can never be the same from language to language, culture to culture.

This is all the more true of poetic texts, where, in order to recreate the feel of the original (its 'poetry'), in a second language, adjustments to the content of the source text will inevitably be demanded. The texts, source and translated, will always be at parallel. They can only ever converge in

an unreachable distance. To judge, therefore, a translation by its 'faithfulness' to the original text, persistently viewing the translator as potential traitor, is a misguided approach. To focus on and lament the gap between the two (the source and translation) is to think of translation as "based on absence" (LAYERS OF THE ONION, Michèle Roberts, Poetry Review, Vol 81 No 3 1991, p 36). To appreciate the art of translation truly is to think of it as art, and welcome rather than lament the inevitable gap between the translated and source text. Thereby the process of translation is elevated from a dictionary exercise to an act of re-creation.

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